

Impact Report 2023



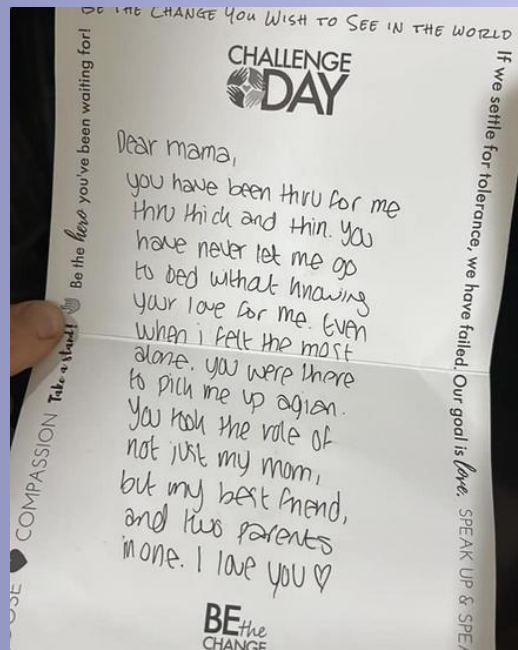


andrahanks1



andrahanks1 As soon as I picked Lily up from school, I knew today was deep. Her mascara was gone, she looked exhausted and I could tell she couldn't wait to get in the car. She immediately started crying, hugged me, handed me a folded note and she was filled with so much emotion that at first I couldn't even understand her. She was so happy, sad, grateful, exhausted, empowered, thankful, empathetic and so sincere. It was then I realized how powerful today was for her and her peers.

Goodrich High School brought Challenge Day to a group of students who were allowed the space to feel, share and heal past hurts. The work @challengeday is doing is work of the heart-creating a world where everyone feels safe, loved and celebrated. Thank you to the amazing facilitators and the teachers and staff who participated and pushed for this to happen at GHS-and to the students who showed up with maturity, bravery and empathy. If you haven't heard of it, google some videos and watch. Encourage your community and schools to participate. Lily said it best when she



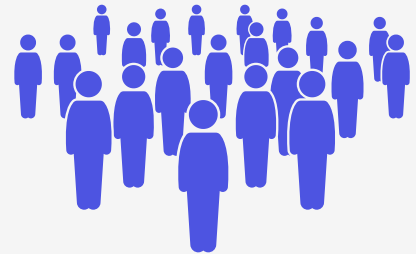
Our Impact

We are committed to building compassion & hope in our communities.

Through innovative programs and approaches, we help youth and adults unlearn harmful habits, discover strengths in vulnerability, and experience the social and emotional rewards of full expression through the lens of compassion, connection, and diversity.



YEARS



2,700

35

1,225,440

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Mission & Vision



Challenge Day provides youth and their communities with experiential programs that demonstrate the possibility of love and connection through the celebration of diversity, truth and full expression.

Our vision is that every child lives in a world where they feel safe, loved and celebrated.

**"We need programs like
Challenge Day to help people
understand that we truly are
amazing!"**

**Rudy Pauls, 2017 Class President,
Mountain Point High School
Phoenix, Arizona**

Message from our Founders



New Beginning for Challenge Day: Spreading "Be the Change" and Empathy throughout the World

In these past four years of Challenge Day, my husband Rich and I have witnessed some of the most challenging times in the 36-year history of our nonprofit organization. Today, I want to take a moment to express my deep gratitude and admiration for our incredible staff and leaders. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, they have tirelessly worked to keep Challenge Day alive, adapting to new virtual platforms and finding safe ways to bring our programs into schools. Their dedication has been instrumental in nurturing the growth and resilience of Challenge Day, even in the face of adversity.

The world experienced unprecedented difficulties during the pandemic, and Challenge Day was no exception. However, we firmly believe that now, more than ever, Challenge Day is needed on planet Earth. The tools we provide – vulnerability, healing, connection, unity, compassion, and empathy – are essential not only for teenagers but for everyone around the globe.

To fulfill our mission, we are collaborating with friends and influential individuals to elevate Challenge Day and the Be the Change movement. Our ultimate goal is to make Challenge Day accessible to all who seek it, regardless of their location. This new chapter marks the beginning of our quest to bring the transformative power of Challenge Day to people worldwide.

Although I would love to share more about our dreams, hopes, and goals, we recognize that this is a crucial moment for us to step up and work tirelessly to extend the reach of our programs. We are fueled by a deep sense of responsibility to share the love and belief in change with individuals across the globe. Every day, we strive to be the change we wish to see.

In the coming months and years, we will continue to share updates on our progress and endeavors. We invite all who believe in the power of change to join us in this journey. Together, we can create a world where empathy, understanding, and transformation are the cornerstones of our collective experience.

With heartfelt appreciation and love,

Yvonne and Rich St. John-Dutra

BOARD MEMBERS



Rich Dutra-
St. John
Co-Founder



Victoria Gazulis
President



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Yvonne St. John-
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Executive Director Ana Rubio's Commitment...



Celebrating her Mexican-American, Latino roots and Challenge Day, Ana was interviewed by Carlos Medina for the award-winning TV Show Que Pasa PBS, NJ: Aired: June 10, 2023



I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude as I reflect on the profound impact Challenge Day has had on over 1 million lives over the past 36 years and how we will reach the next million.

I have been working with Challenge Day for 15 years, having started as a client relations assistant and have been in every position in the organization. So it has been with great joy, honor and conviction that I stepped into the role of Executive Director, continuing the incredible work of this organization while navigating the post-COVID landscape.

During the global pandemic, Challenge Day swiftly adapted its programs to virtual offerings. However, like many nonprofits, our organization was significantly impacted financially, experiencing an 80% decrease in programs. Previously, we provided 600 programming days per year, and now we are at approximately 200 days across the U.S.

Reach the Next Million Youth and Adults!

Despite these challenges, we have witnessed the transformative power of Challenge Day's programs and our own resilience.

We take pride in the recent CDC report validating the significance of school connectedness—a principle that Challenge Day has championed since its inception in 1987. Our programs provide a safe space for students to cultivate self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making skills.

We sincerely appreciate the feedback we receive from schools, as it allows us to grow, learn, and continuously improve. Your invaluable input helps us adapt and refine our programs, ensuring they resonate with participants and make a lasting difference.

As we embark on this new phase of Challenge Day's journey, we invite you to foster empathy, connection, and positive change. Together, we can create a world where every individual feels valued and supported.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in the power of Challenge Day to inspire each of us to Be the Change!

Ana Rubio

CDC Report Confirmed Lasting Positive Effect of School Connectedness On Adolescents

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data Summary & Trends Report (2011 – 2021) related to adolescent health and well-being and the health behaviors and experiences among U.S. high school students.

While the report highlights a decade’s data of successes and challenges, it points to the negative trend of mental health among students continuing to worsen following the global COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the first YRBS data collected since the start of the pandemic, subsets of students have had “very different experiences.”

And for the first time, the YRBS measured social determinants of health related to unstable housing and protective factors related to school connectedness and parental monitoring.

The CDC’s data confirm what Challenge Day has prioritized in our programs and known all along that “school connectedness plays a vital role in shaping mental, physical and social growth.”

While the data are alarming, the new measurement of **school connectedness**, defined by the CDC as “**the feeling among adolescents that people at their school care about them, their well-being and success,**” reaffirms the critical need for the work driving Challenge Day’s mission and our far-reaching impact since our inception in 1987.

Further, the report advises schools to develop partnerships to help build school connectedness and counter the negative trends cited.

As a nonprofit invested in building compassion and hope in schools and our communities, we depend on your support and generosity to expand our reach with our innovative programs and approaches that help youth and adults unlearn harmful habits, discover strengths in vulnerability, and experience the social and emotional rewards of full expression through the lens of compassion, connection and diversity.

CDC Defines School Connectedness as “the feeling among adolescents that people at their school care about them, their well-being and success”



Bullied in School

15% of high school students were bullied on school property during the past year. Female students were more likely than male students to be bullied at school.

- **LGBQ+ students** and students who had any same-sex partners were **more likely** than their peers to be bullied at school.



Electronically Bullied

16% of high school students were electronically bullied, including through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media, during the past year.

- **Female students** were **more likely** than male students to be electronically bullied.
- **LGBQ+ students** and students who had any same-sex partners were **more likely** than their peers to be electronically bullied.



Safe and Supportive Environment

More than 95% of U.S. children and adolescents spend a significant portion of their daily lives in school, schools providing a safe and supportive environment have an opportunity to help youth acquire the knowledge and skills needed to adopt healthy behaviors and experiences.

STUDIES SHOW

Researchers at universities in the Northeast and their colleagues across the country analyzed SEL's impact in over 400 studies from the last 13 years, representing the experiences of over half a million K-12 students from more than 50 countries.*

STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN SEL PROGRAMS REPORTED

Better Relationships with

Their teachers, witnessed less violent and aggressive acts at school, and expressed that their school environments have fair policies and rules.

Better able to

Engage socially when they have a foundation in their own emotions, attitudes and beliefs.

Range of Skills Helped

- Develop self-awareness
- Form healthy relationships
- Set goals Make decisions and
- Consider different perspectives



← **Tweet**



thank you so much for sharing your CD experience! We love the support and bringing lifelong tools for social and emotional well-being to students and staff.

Darnell Williams @mrdee_williams · Jun 1
@ChallengeDay thank you for impacting my students & staff the LOVE in the room was unreal!

Then right to kickball with some amazing staff & students!

#bethechange



"Why Is Challenge Day Important?"

**Micah Cowie, 12th Grade,
Cesar Chavez High School
Laveen Village, Arizona**

IMPACTING BY THE NUMBERS

Challenge Day's program sparks a remarkable transformation among participating students. Here are the overall results from our post-program Students Survey on the effects Challenge Day has had on participants.



90%

Were more welcoming of others who are unlike them

76%

Reported feeling less alone

70%

Were more conscious of the experiences of their classmates

63%

Felt better connected to their school's peers and adults





87%

Reported feeling less alone

Acknowledged that suppressed feelings can lead to aggression and self-harm

78%

Reported having supportive and constructive relationships with friends, teachers, and family

62%

Acknowledged that suppressed feelings can lead to aggression and self-harm

69%

Felt empowered to create change at their school, community and/or in the world



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Leikin Poppino, Class of 2010, Freedom High School

In 2010, the MTV Series “If You Really Knew Me,” produced by Arnold Shapiro, went inside Freedom High School in Oakley, California. Meet Leikin Poppino, who participated in Challenge Day.



Challenge Day is the most powerful thing I think you can give to anybody, especially at a young age, just to let them know that they're not alone. Because loneliness is just terrifying, and you know, it helps build your confidence."

Principal Kara Trevino of Killeen High School, Killeen, TX

In the heart of Killeen, Texas, Principal Kara Trevino of Killeen High School has embarked on a mission close to her heart that resonates deeply with her roots as an educator and her unwavering dedication to her students. Principal Trevino, who graduated from Killeen High School, shares her profound connection to Challenge Day and its transformative impact on her students and faculty.

As the principal of Killeen High School for the past five years, Principal Trevino's passion for Challenge Day is palpable. When asked about the program's significance, she says, "From the moment it was here, my staff, students, and even parents every year, that is the one thing that comes up. We have to do Challenge Day."

Having grown up at Killeen High School, where her father also taught and coached, she knows intimately the power of fostering connections within a school community.

In 2010, Principal Trevino learned about Challenge Day as an assistant principal at Charles E. Patterson Middle School while attending a summer conference with her former principal and meeting founders Yvonne and Rich St. John-Dutra. The experience spoke to their hearts, and without hesitation, they knew they had to bring Challenge Day to their school.

Principal Trevino recounts the profound effect the program has had on individuals within her community. She shares the story of a student who had been hard to connect with before Challenge Day. Principal Trevino trusted the process and witnessed a transformative shift in their relationship. She shares, "After that Challenge Day with him, I got hugs daily. He's still struggling with things, but at the end of the day, we have that bond, and that's what it's all about."

The impact of Challenge Day extends beyond student experiences—it has also positively transformed staff dynamics. Principal Trevino recalls a department within her school that was struggling with collaboration and cohesion.

However, she witnessed their profound change after inviting them to participate in Challenge Day. The entire team willingly embraced the opportunity, and the effects were transformative. One teacher approached Principal Trevino after the program, expressing gratitude for the experience and sharing that the entire team had become entirely different due to the impact of Challenge Day. The department's newfound unity and collaboration continue to thrive.

Reflecting on her growth as an educator, Principal Trevino emphasizes the invaluable skill of listening that she acquired through Challenge Day. She recalls moments of silence during small group discussions, where allowing individuals to communicate through their silence proved to be a powerful act of compassion. These experiences have equipped her to handle challenging situations and effectively support students, parents, and staff.

The stories shared by Principal Trevino exemplify the power of Challenge Day to create connections and foster empathy among students and faculty alike. It is a program that transcends boundaries, bringing individuals together and equipping them with the tools to navigate challenges with resilience and compassion.

Award-Winning Executive TV Producer **Arnold Shapiro** On Supporting Challenge Day



Arnold Shapiro, a renowned television producer and storyteller, has left an indelible mark on the industry throughout his 52-year career. With over 90 nationally-televised documentary series and specials to his name, including the groundbreaking "Scared Straight!" and influential shows like "Rescue 911" and "Beyond Scared Straight," Shapiro's work has garnered him numerous awards, including 16 Emmys and an Academy Award.

Yet, amidst his illustrious career, it was a singular docuseries that profoundly impacted Shapiro personally. In 2010, he produced "If You Really Knew Me" for MTV, capturing the transformative journey of high school students as they participated in Challenge Day, a one-day program that shattered barriers, combated prejudice, and forever changed their perceptions of the students and each other.

Shapiro's emotional connection with Challenge Day propelled him and his wife, Karen, to become ardent donors and supporters of the organization. Determined to share this life-altering program with a broader audience, Shapiro embarked on a mission to bring Challenge Day to the attention of Oprah Winfrey.

He reached out to Winfrey and her executive producer, sharing clips of the docuseries showcasing Challenge Day's profound impact. After six months of unwavering effort, the founders of Challenge Day, Richard and Yvonne, appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show—an opportunity they would repeat three times.



Arnold Shapiro's remarkable journey with Challenge Day encapsulates the extraordinary impact that a single program can have on the lives of countless young people and the broader community.

Through his unwavering commitment as a donor, Shapiro has become an architect of change, ensuring that Challenge Day continues to expand its reach, enhance its programs, and listen attentively to the needs of the communities it serves.

As the organization evolves, we remain an enduring symbol of hope, compassion, and the unwavering belief that change is not only possible but within reach.



OUR PROGRAM FACILITATORS

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Before leading their first school program, our facilitators are trained by our senior staff for 4-6 months in Challenge Day program best practices. Ongoing training includes topics like Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, school violence prevention, neuroplasticity, Adverse Childhood Experiences and the impact of trauma, and trends in adolescent mental health.

Challenge Day's Program Manager **Shanti Bechar** on What Makes Our Facilitators Special

Shanti oversees the Training Department and Challenge Day Facilitators in her role as Director of Programs. Shanti was born in Brooklyn, NY, to immigrant parents from Guyana, South America. She was raised in the SF East Bay Area, with a unique blend of influences from Caribbean, Indian and American culture, and in a family that valued community service, connection and compassion.

Her love of the written and spoken word led her to the University of California at Berkeley, where she graduated with a degree in English Literature and then pursued career opportunities in editing and management. Ultimately, her desire to work in a more service-oriented field led to her discovering Challenge Day in 2005.

For the next 11 years, Shanti nurtured a strong sense of purpose, contributing to the development of the Challenge Day program through her work in the Client Relations Department. Witnessing and experiencing firsthand the power of the programs to engender safe and accepting environments where people express their authentic selves have been some of her most meaningful and transformative experiences.

Facilitator **Whitney Johnson** On How Challenge Day Shows Up for Youth

Whitney T. Johnson, M.Ed, LSC, LPC, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, is a compassionate individual driven by a desire to help others. After attending Challenge Day in the 9th grade, she became determined to make a difference in people's lives. With a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Minor in Social Science from Lake Erie College, Whitney understands the importance of hard work and teamwork. She served in the Army for six years while pursuing a Master's in School Counseling from Cleveland State University. As a Challenge Day program facilitator, she now facilitates transformative experiences nationwide, spreading love and compassion.



Challenge Day is a program that every single time we step in a room, we want to hear what they have to say. This is a program that can allow students to show up in whatever ways they want, and we accept them, that we love them regardless of how they show up.”

INTERVIEWS: Facilitator

Gina Pernini Gordon

Listen to an inspiring interview with Gina Perini Gordon, an extraordinary facilitator who has made a significant impact on the lives of young people. Born and raised near Chicago, Gina moved to California in pursuit of her passion for making a difference. As a Challenge Day Leader, she spent years facilitating transformative experiences for students across the United States, Canada, Holland, and Belgium. Now, after a break to start a family, Gina is thrilled to return to this crucial work.



Challenge Day is a program that every single time we step in a room, we want to hear what they have to say. This is a program that can allow students to show up in whatever ways they want, and we accept them, that we love them regardless of how they show up.”

INTERVIEWS: Facilitator

Tony Lowe

Tony Lowe has facilitated experiential learning workshops for 16 years. Tony has led Challenge Day workshops in four countries, working with school systems, rehabilitation facilities, First Nation and American Indian communities, school faculties, and for-profit corporations. Tony has spoken at Challenge Day assemblies, facilitated the integration of refugees into public schools in Nyköping, Sweden, and been featured on the Dutch TV series Over De Streep. He is a member of the Challenge Day training department, coaching team, scripting team, music committee and is always looking for new ways to serve.



We're always coming up with new ideas for how to reach the people we are speaking with and connect with them in a profound, authentic way without it being a performance."

INTERVIEWS: Facilitator

Pam Dunn

Pam Dunn has been an integral member of the Challenge Day team since 2003, assuming various roles such as Training Director, coach, and Challenge Day leader. Her involvement with Challenge Day has been one of the most significant aspects of her life. Pam has also been part of the popular Dutch television series called "Over de Streef" (translated to "Cross the Line"), which incorporates activities similar to those found in Challenge Day programs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pam contributed to the team's efforts in transitioning toward virtual programming. Also, Pam has made valuable contributions to Be Present, Inc., a national organization initially founded by Black women but now open to all individuals seeking mutual support in leadership.



The more we feel like we belong with each other. The more we can stand up for each other, the more we can be allies for each other.”

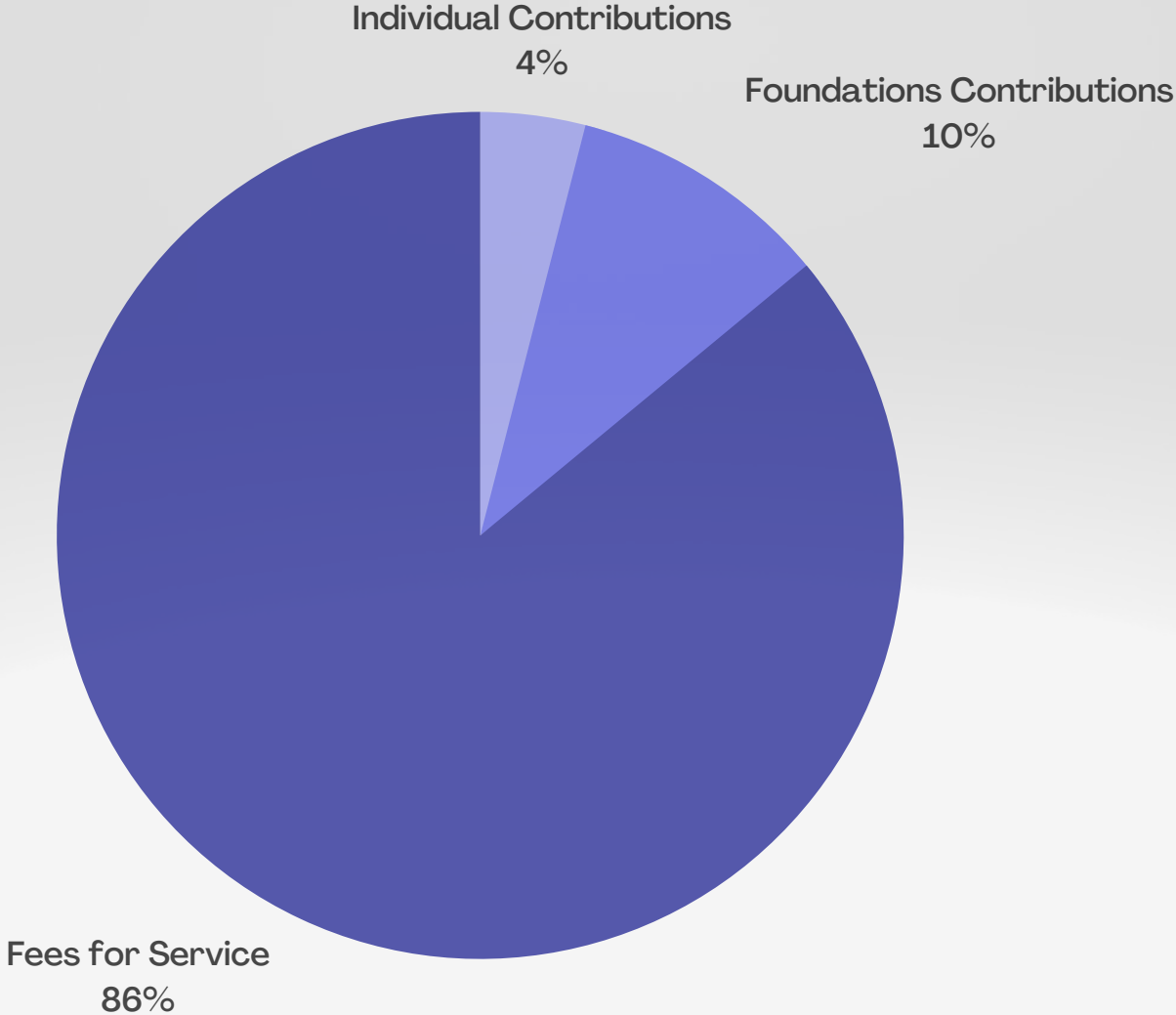
Special Message from Challenge Day's Board President Victoria Gazulis

Challenge Day Board President Victoria Gazulis is an accomplished Enterprise Software Account Executive at Google, where she works with Fortune 500 Financial Services clients. With a degree in Global Studies from UCLA, Victoria is deeply passionate about the impact of globalization and media on society. Her time at UCLA brought her into contact with the legendary John Wooden, whose teachings on embracing adversity and making each day a masterpiece have shaped her mindset. She draws inspiration from Oprah Winfrey, admiring her ability to embody these traits while also imparting wisdom to others.

“If you are looking to donate, go to challengeday.org and click that donate button and I’m always happy to connect as well. We greatly appreciate you as do all the kids that will be influenced by the programs impact.”

Challenge Day Funding Resources

As of June 2023



For more information



**We are committed
to building
compassion & hope
in our communities.**

Contact

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